

Appl. No. 09/675,824
Amtd. after Allowance dated August 24, 2004

PATENT

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A support arm assembly, comprising:
a table mount;
an arm coupled to said table mount;
an end effector coupled to said arm, said end effector having a stationary jaw member, a retractable jaw member biased to move toward the stationary jaw member that moves relative to the stationary jaw member and a spring which biases the retractable jaw member toward the stationary jaw member; and

a heart stabilizer having a shaft, the shaft held between the retractable jaw member and the stationary jaw member by force of the spring without rotation of a threaded fastener.

Claims 2-3 (canceled).

4. (previously presented) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said arm is adjustable and includes a locking knob which locks the arm in a fixed position.

5. (original) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said table mount includes a jaw and a table knob.

6. (original) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said arm includes a first linkage, a second linkage coupled to said first linkage, and a third linkage coupled to said second linkage and said end effector.

7. (original) The support arm of claim 6, wherein said first linkage is adapted to move relative to said table mount.

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8. (original) The support arm of claim 6, wherein said second linkage can move relative to said first linkage, said third linkage can move relative to said second linkage and said end effector can move relative to said third linkage.

9. (previously presented) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said end effector includes a channel that receives the shaft of the heart stabilizer.

10. (original) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said end effector includes a plate.

11. (currently amended) A support arm assembly, comprising:
a table mount adapted to be secured to the table;
a first linkage coupled to said table mount;
a second linkage pivotally coupled to said first linkage;
a third linkage pivotally coupled to said second linkage;
an end effector pivotally coupled to said third linkage, the end effector having a stationary jaw member, a retractable jaw member biased to move that moves relative to the stationary jaw member ~~and a spring which biases the retractable jaw member toward the stationary jaw member~~ jaw member coupled to a spring; and
a heart stabilizer having a shaft, the shaft held between the retractable jaw member and the stationary jaw member ~~by force of the spring~~ without rotation of a threaded fastener.

Claims 12-13 (canceled).

14. (original) The support arm of claim 11, further comprising a locking knob that can be manipulated to lock said first, second and third linkage arms.

15. (original) The support arm of claim 11, wherein said table mount includes a jaw and a table knob.

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16. (previously presented) A method for coupling a heart stabilizer to a table, comprising:

mounting a support arm to the table;

adjusting a position of an end effector of the support arm, the end effector having a retractable jaw member;

retracting the jaw member, the retraction creates a spring force;

inserting a heart stabilizer into the end effector; and

releasing the jaw member so that the spring force returns the jaw member and secures the end effector to the heart stabilizer.

Claim 17 (canceled).

18. (original) The method of claim 16, wherein a first person holds the heart stabilizer while a second person couples the heart stabilizer to the end effector.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein adjusting the position of the end effector of the support arm, retracting the jaw member and releasing the jaw member is performed by one hand of a user while the inserting of the heart stabilizer into the end effector is performed by another hand of the user.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising locking the adjusted support arm into an operating position.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising positioning a patient on the table, positioning the heart stabilizer in relation to a heart of the patient prior to the inserting step, and maintaining the position of the heart stabilizer during the inserting step.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the adjusting step is performed after positioning the heart stabilizer.

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23. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the end effector includes a stationary jaw member, the heart stabilizer includes a shaft and the inserting step comprises inserting the shaft between the retractable jaw member and the stationary jaw member.

24. (previously presented) The support arm of claim 9, wherein the channel is sized to receive shafts having diameters in a range between 2 and 15 millimeters.

25. (previously presented) The support arm of claim 9, wherein the channel is shaped to receive cylindrical shaped shafts.

26. (previously presented) The support arm of claim 9, wherein the channel is shaped to receive square shaped shafts.

27. (new) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said biased retractable jaw member moves relative to the stationary jaw member by action of a spring.

28. (new) The support arm of claim 11, wherein said biased retractable jaw member moves relative to the stationary jaw member by action of a spring.